

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

CONTRIBUTED BY MONTANA SPONSORS OF APPRENTICESHIP

PROLOUGE

Given the geographic size of Montana and the lack of available resource, providing a classroom–instructor environment for all registered Montana apprentices is more of a “wish” than a reality. A large number of Montana apprentices are taking their required related instruction through a correspondence home educational delivery system either offered by MSU-Northern in Havre or the North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) in Wahpeton, ND. This educational system is reasonable in cost, continuously upgraded, has some internet capabilities and both providers have a high customer service standard.

The system is not without its down side though. The coursework is technical in nature and the apprentice does not have immediate instructor or student support. The apprentice is expected to complete the coursework as predicated by the schedule stated in the registered apprenticeship standards, but often times, personal interests, family and other priorities will negatively influence the apprentice’s motivation to complete their courses on a timely basis.

The following information is a summary of “best practices” that are currently being utilized by Montana sponsor/employer’s of registered apprenticeship that have been proven successful in motivating and lending assistance to apprentices in the successful completion of the required coursework. The “best practice” examples are from the Industry and not the Program but developed by Program staff to provide you with working examples that have demonstrated proven success.

- The sponsor provides a quiet space for the apprentice to come in 1 hour before or after work to complete coursework – up to 3 times a week.
- Under written agreement the apprentice is obligated to turn in no less than 2 coursework assignments during a pay period to receive a paycheck.
- The sponsor encourages an apprentice to set aside blocks of time once a week away from home for coursework completion by using the library, coffee shops, schools or the sponsors shop or office as an alternate location.
- The sponsor can contact other sponsors in like occupations in their area to suggest that area apprentices meet as a group at a designated location weekly as a coursework activity.
- Sponsors can identify a retired journeyman or master, a recent apprenticeship graduate, or senior apprentices willing and able to mentor new or apprentices having difficulty with coursework completion.
- To take a pro-active stance in the apprentices’ efforts, Industry practices suggest that sponsor’s seeking to motivate apprentice’s to complete coursework on a timely basis should post long range coursework completion goals, maintain an awareness of the apprentice’s progress and identify needs for coursework assistance.
- Industry practices suggest that sponsors should not advance apprentices with pay increases if their coursework is not being completed as scheduled. The sponsor loses valuable leverage for motivating the apprentice to complete coursework when pay raises are provided without timely completion of coursework being a requirement.
- Sponsor feed back suggests by enforcing a coursework completion schedule, the end result is a more responsible apprentice and more competent journeyman.

- Industry practices suggest that sponsors take a proactive interest by reviewing each lesson before it is submitted, helping apprentice(s) review for each course exam, and provide technical assistance in preparation for the journeyman's exam.
- Sponsors have the ability to utilize community-based adult basic education resources for free or low cost assistance with math, reading comprehension and basic study management skills for their apprentices.
- Some sponsors require apprentices to initially pay for the total cost of the coursework however the sponsor will reimburse the apprentice the cost of those courses upon successful and timely completion. This approach guarantees that the apprentice has a financial "buy-in" for the cost of their education.
- Some sponsors require no less than 2 lessons to be turned in each Monday morning in order to allow the apprentice to work that week.
- The Program recommends that sponsors seeking a variance to the apprentice ratio, according to administrative rules, need to be aware that existing apprentice must be current in coursework to qualify for ratio exemptions.
- Industry practices suggest sponsors communicate to the apprentice that there are term limits to apprenticeship and it is not an open ended program; there is an expectation for timely completion.
- Sponsor feed back suggest that employers with a solid record of completing apprentices typically conduct a thorough recruitment and assessment of candidates to ensure that the apprentice will adapt successfully to the company's performance standards and will remain with the business.
- Industry practices suggest that you clearly identify your training objectives. Review the apprentice contract with them at the time for wage increases to develop a basic understanding of your continuing expectations and skill requirements.
- Industry practices suggest regular communication between the skilled worker(s) and the apprentice to ensure that an appropriate level of supervision and training is taking place.
- Industry practices suggest conducting performance reviews on a regular basis, Offer new challenges and if possible, vary the job duties to ensure well rounded training. This will enable your apprentice to stay interested in the work. It will also increase the overall skill base of the company.
- Industry practices suggest educating your staff concerning the value of training and the importance of having apprentices on the job site. Fostering a positive working environment where apprentices feel appreciated by the company and by their peers will increase employee retention, thereby reducing future hiring and training costs. Your apprentices' are the future of your business.

For further information on "best practices" in apprenticeship administration, please feel free to contact the Apprenticeship and Training Program or your area Apprenticeship and Training Program Field Representative at 406-444-3998.